

NEWS RELEASE

*United States
Department of
Agriculture
Southwestern Region*

**Tonto National Forest
2324 E. McDowell Rd.
Phoenix, Arizona 85006
(602) 225-5200**



www.fs.fed.us/r3/tonto/

**For Immediate Release
8 February 1430**

**Contact: Fire Information
(602) 525-1042**

February fire update

PHOENIX (February 8, 2006) -- The February fire north of Payson, AZ, grew to more than 1200 acres overnight as downslope winds blew the fire into tinder-dry juniper and ponderosa pine vegetation south of the Mogollon Rim and the Highline Trail. Due to the complex nature of the fire suppression effort, the Tonto National Forest will transition management to the Central West Arizona Coordinating Group Type II Incident Management Team at 6 pm today.

Today the fire has been burning actively on its southwest flank. It is expected that winds throughout the day will continue to push the fire to the south and west. Five Type II hand crews, nine wildland firefighting engines and three helicopters have been concentrating their fire suppression efforts in this area. Fire managers have stationed structural protection engines and crews at Bray Creek Ranch and have ordered additional structural protection for Camp Geronimo Boy Scout Camp, located two miles west of the fire. Over 170 personnel are assigned to the fire. A lead plane and two heavy air tankers from Arkansas and Missoula, Montana have been ordered and are enroute.

Winds from the east are helping to hold the east flank of the fire in place. Communities along the East Verde River are not immediately threatened.

Road and trail closures will go into effect for the Mogollon Rim Road on Forest Road 147 from its intersection with State Route 87 to its terminus with Forest Road 300; and Forest Road 300 from its intersection with State Route 87 and including access to Milk Ranch Point. Tonto National Forest will

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be closing the area around the fire from the Mogollon Rim on the north; Pine on the west; the Control Road on the south; and the East Verde River on the east. For further closure and fire information, see the Tonto National Forest website www.fs.fed.us/r3/tonto or call 602-225-5200.

The fire was first reported late Monday and it is believed to have been caused by an abandoned campfire. An investigation is being conducted by Forest Service law enforcement officials.

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Useful Web fire information sites:

Southwest Coordination Center: <http://gacc.nifc.gov/swcc>

National Interagency Fire Center: www.nifc.gov

National Fire Plan: www.fireplan.gov

FireWise: www.firewise.org

National Incident Information Center: www.fs.fed.us/news/fire

Arizona Governor's Forest Health Council: www.governor.state.az.us/FHC